

REVIEWS

POSTGRADUATE GASTROENTEROLOGY. Edited by T. J. Thomson and I. E. Gillespie. (Pp. 342; figs. 118. 50s). London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1966.

THIS publication is a record of the proceedings of a Conference on Gastroenterology held at the Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow in December, 1965, and reports up to date reviews of work in selected aspects of gastroenterology. The subjects have been reviewed at a particularly opportune time as they represent fields in which a great deal of new and valuable work has been completed. One of the attractive features of this report is that many of the authors have ventured beyond the mere statement of experimental findings and have developed hypotheses to account for the various data which have become available in the last few years. Such attempts at rationalisation are much needed in gastroenterology today.

The seven reviews on gastrin are particularly helpful at this time. It is now clear that this hormone is one of the important co-ordinating materials of the alimentary tract and the reviews of the subject in this publication should be helpful to all who are concerned to have an up to date knowledge of its current status.

Six presentations deal with vagotomy and its problems. Reading this section, one is impressed by the unsatisfactory nature of data about this operation. The clinical surveys and the significance of the insulin stimulation test leave much to be desired and one is left with the feeling that enthusiasms for this operation are beginning to wane.

The section on small intestinal absorption is particularly valuable in presenting general concepts on the nature of absorption. It tends to deal with the subject at the biochemical and microanatomical level so that clinical problems are discussed only indirectly. However, anyone who wishes to have an understanding of the nature of the complex problems presented by malabsorption states, would do well to read these accounts of current thinking on the subject.

Other current problems dealt with are the increasing incidence of hepatic toxicity due to drugs, and a section reviewing current diagnostic and therapeutic advances in gastroenterology.

The price at 50s seems rather high for a paper-back, but no other current publication presents together such a wealth of basic clinical and physiological data about the alimentary tract. It clearly has to be read by anyone with an interest in gastroenterology.

A.M.C.

THE GENETICS OF GASTRO-INTESTINAL DISORDERS. By R. B. McConnell, *T.D.*, M.D., M.R.C.P. (Pp. IX+282; figs. 47. 70s). London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

ABDOMINAL medicine, as McDonnell, Malcolm, Cuming and Whitla knew it, has been transformed by the success of surgical treatment and surgical prophylaxis of abdominal sepsis, and by the retreat of the bacterial diseases of the abdominal and pelvic viscera and peritoneum. Abdominal physicians in this country are now predominantly concerned with nutrition (dietary, absorptive and utilitative), with cancer, with gastric hypersecretion and its consequences, with the malabsorptive diseases of the small intestine and with ulcerative colitis. Virology, bacteriology and environmental study may yet do much for us, but the solution to some of our problems must be metabolic, and the origins of some are genetic.

Doctor R. B. McConnell's book reviews for the physician the present state of the genetics of abdominal disease. It is comprehensive, and clearly written. The summaries are decisive. The growing points are indicated and the deficiencies of the subject are made clear. There are 1098 references, each giving the title of the paper. There is a helpful genetic glossary and there are subject and author indexes. The proof reading has been good. This is a really useful book, suitable for hospital libraries and medical unit book shelves. It cannot in the present state of knowledge make a big difference to practice but it will help thinking. It is essential reading for membership candidates.

J.S.L.